1: McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

121 128 If I were to investigate and report on the Bella Coola at the present time, I would undoubtedly be influenced by many years of contact with American anthropologists and their work. I would assume a greater knowledge of North-West coast institutions, less interest in the details of ceremonial rites, and it would be impossible not to avoid comparisons with, and observations upon, the theoretical implications of many of the facts recorded. But though every field investigator is strictly objective as to the facts he collects, yet his interests, and his method of presenting them, are coloured by his background; in my case, by the older school of English anthropology. On the whole, I think this is fortunate. It means that the Bella Coola are portrayed as I saw them when I came fresh to a new field, practically uninfluenced by problems of North-West coast culture, and fully prepared to throw myself into their life. They were "my people," not a group in which I was interested because they had, or had not, certain culture traits with which I was concerned. In the course of my teaching experience, furthermore, I have wished repeatedly to give serious students detailed field monographs in which are recorded the interwoven social, religious, and folk-lore concepts of a people, the sum-total of their mental life, collected by one man at one time. This I have tried to do for the Bella Coola.

123 [115] Following the English tradition, I wish to record how this material was collected. Before leaving for British Columbia, I was advised by the late H. I. Smith, who had worked in the area, to talk to Joshua Moody (see Plate 2), an elderly Bella Coola Indian with whom Smith had worked. On explaining to Joshua that I had come to record in permanent form the traditions and lore of *his* people, Joshua grinned broadly and promised his help. Unfortunately, he spoke only a few words of English. I tried interpreter after interpreter, Indian and white, with only fair success, and my difficulties increased with the [464] opening of the canning season and the consequent employment of the younger men and women. I was urged to learn the [122] Chinook jargon, which serves widely as a *lingua franca* on the [198]

1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924)1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

coast, and began the study with much misgiving. The results were surprisingly satisfactory.

After a few weeks I found that I had sufficient knowledge of Chinook to dispense with interpreters and deal directly with the older people, a tremendous advantage. Pride of ancestry is one of the strongest characteristics of the Bella Coola, and once convinced of my sincere interest in and respect for their history, they were willing to talk. They resent the condescension with which most white men regard them, so that contact with one who was friendly and sympathetic came as a pleasant surprise. There were, of course, difficulties. The canning season had begun and every able-bodied man was working away from the village. The conviction of each person that he was the best source of information, and that conferences with another were useless or unreliable, caused distrust. The desire of each informant to discuss only what interested him; the complexity of Bella Coola life itself; the necessity of checking every statement, and the extreme difficulty of doing so on account of discrepancies in the myths of different families; the fear, almost groundless, of each individual that someone else had infringed on his rights by recounting some legend; and, not least, the need for tact, patience, and a sense of humour under all conditions, were some of the obstacles to be surmounted. Nor was Chinook entirely satisfactory. It has enough words for matters pertaining to fishing, hunting, and trading, but for the realms of sociology or theology it is inadequate. This difficulty could not have been overcome without the patient help of my informants. Animated by the desire to help, they used every expedient in the way of parallel and synonym to explain obscure terms. Sometimes a younger man was called in for some abstruse meaning; more often it gradually became clear from different applications. Once the significance of a word was definitely understood, I made a note of it and used it henceforth. A useful vocabulary was thus built up, and conversations were carried on in mixed Bella Coola and Chinook, eked out by whatever English words were known by the person with

2: McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

177 their earning ability and a man can satisfy his wants by working
182 for a few months each summer. The decline of ceremonials has left a blank in their lives, too easily filled, alas, with drinking, idleness, and vice. It is inevitable that the old rites and old ambitions should pass, but the prohibition of these before new ones had taken their place, has been disastrous. The Bella Coola have lost their pride, a calamity as fatal to a people as to an individual.

They have shown undoubted ability in developing such of their own talents as fit the needs and requirements of the white man. Expert carpenters for generations, they have readily [322] learnt the use of new tools and now build houses and boats of considerable constructional skill. They have proved themselves valuable employees of the canneries which rely to a [464] large extent upon Indian labour. Under instruction from a [533] white teacher, a number of the younger men have formed a band which gives creditable performances with wind and percussion instruments. One can only deplore the fact that the skill of the Bella Coola in carving, painting, acting, singing, composing, and story-telling could not have been guided into channels where it would have developed and added lustre to the new world in which they find themselves.

The white man's civilization presses forward as an overwhelming flood, blotting out the cultures of lesser peoples in all parts of the world. This is inevitable, probably it is well that it should be so, but it offers little consolation to a tribe like the Bella Coola. Their life has been destroyed; and, wonderingly, half-proudly, half-plaintively, the survivors watch the downfall of all that their ancestors cherished. Too often the white man fails to understand this; too often he fails to realize that progress, as he sees it, is wiping out valuable elements of civilizations other than his own instead of seeking the good in them and preserving it for the benefit of himself and the native alike. The Bella Coola culture is dying, and with it will pass forever something created by a Canadian people, not great perhaps, but ineffably stamped with their personality.

3: Smith E-5 (1920-1923) 1925
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

SYMPATHETIC MAGIC AND WITCHCRAFT AMONG THE BELLACOOLA

By HARLAN I. SMITH

177
754
789
[797]
[658]
[464]

MANY OF the Bellacoola Indians today believe in sympathetic magic and witchcraft, after over a hundred years of contact with white men. Most of them live within hearing of the bells of the mission church, and the government school. Not a few of the men take logging contracts; some of them build and operate motor boats; many of them join the fishing fleets of the salmon canneries; most of the women work in the canneries; and all deal at the white men's stores.

101
131
[161]

The Bellacoola lived at the heads of the long inlets half way up the Pacific Coast of Canada and in the tributary Bella Coola valley. Now, numbering perhaps two hundred and fifty, they, with the exception of a few families, are concentrated on one reservation at the mouth of the Bella Coola river. The Bella Coola valley has been called the Norway of Canada. This was where Sir Alexander Mackenzie, the first white man to cross Canada overland, reached the sea.

105

Aboriginally, the Bellacoola were of the North Pacific Coast culture of America, which is characterized by the extensive use of red cedar and sea products, particularly salmon, the making of graceful, sea-going canoes, each hewn from a single cedar, the erection of large rectangular houses made of cedar planks, with carved house posts and totem poles, lack of pottery, and expertness in carpenter work, carving, and painting. This culture belongs to the barefoot area, but the Bellacoolas wore moccasins to a certain extent. The art of the area was that best known from the paintings and carvings of the totem poles, largely of conventionalized animal forms. The life centred around a very highly developed social organization, an extensive and powerful financial system, and property rights to names, rituals and honors. The Bellacoola language is one of the Salish linguistic stock. They